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INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF BEETHOVEN.

By R. M. HAYLEY.

(Concluded from p. 44).

THE following description of Beethoven, drawn by an Englishman who visited him about the period of his life to which we have now arrived, affords many interesting details :—

"The 28th of September, 1823, will be ever remembered by me as a *dies faustus*; indeed, I do not know that I ever passed a happier day. Early in the morning, accompanied by one of his most intimate friends, I paid a visit to Beethoven at the village of Baden, near Vienna, where he was at that time residing. There was no difficulty in obtaining admittance. On first seeing me, Beethoven stared, but immediately shook me heartily by the hand, as if I had been an old acquaintance. He then remembered distinctly a previous visit I had paid him in 1816, although it was of very short duration; a proof of his excellent memory. I observed on this occasion, to my great regret, a very perceptible change in his appearance; and it immediately struck me that the expression of his countenance betokened great unhappiness. His subsequent conversation with my friend confirmed my fears. I was apprehensive that he would not be able to hear a word of what I said. I was, however, mistaken, for he comprehended all. We both spoke loud and slowly to him, and without the use of the speaking-trumpet; but it was evident from his replies that not a word was lost. I must, however, observe that, when he played on the piano, he generally touched the notes so violently, that between twenty and thirty strings suffered in consequence. Nothing can be more intellectual, more animated, and, to use an expression which is so applicable to his own symphonies, nothing can be more energetic than his conversation when you have once put him in a good humour. But an injudicious question, an ill-timed advice, especially with reference to his deafness, are sufficient to estrange him for ever. He wished to ascertain the highest possible compass of the trumpet, for a piece of music he was then engaged in composing, and asked Herr H—— about it; but his answer, however, did not appear to satisfy him. He then told me that he, in general, sought information respecting the make, nature, and compass of the principal instruments, from the different makers themselves.

establish, and if it had been the fact it is inconceivable that she should not have adhered to it firmly. But as soon as she was pressed, she wavered; the fact of the non-completion was wrung from her most reluctantly by the publishers, and she allowed Süßmayer's public declaration to pass without a single dissenting or contesting word! Indeed, in all her communications, under strict confidence, to Stadler and André, she made no hesitation in positively corroborating Süßmayer's story. Her last statement, made almost on her death-bed, is still more positive and conclusive."

7. Perhaps the strongest proof of all is the fact of the legal investigation set on foot by the advocate of Count Wallsegg, the particulars of which are so explicitly and positively testified to by the two persons engaged in the transaction, Stadler and Nissen. The Count complained of having been deceived as to the authorship. The deception was admitted; and it was clearly explained to him what parts in his score were Mozart's, and what parts were Süßmayer's, the very details of this explanation being preserved in André's published copy. How is this reconcilable with the idea of the Wallsegg score being entirely in Mozart's hand?

8. The recent discovery of Eybler's agreement with the widow proves that, immediately after Mozart's death, she was earnestly endeavouring to get the Requiem finished; a fact altogether irreconcilable with the idea of its previous completion by Mozart.

There is little or nothing to set against this overwhelming concurrence of evidence, except the argument gathered from the music itself. That this argument is strong enough to prove the presence of Mozart's ideas and Mozart's genius throughout the whole of the Requiem, appears to be generally conceded; but this is not enough to prove that the entire score proceeded from his pen.

"He introduced his nephew to me, a handsome young man of eighteen, the only relative with whom he lived on friendly terms. On presenting him, he said, 'You can try to puzzle him in Greek, if you like;' intimating the youth's familiarity with that language. The history of this young man places Beethoven's goodness of heart in a most favourable light. The most affectionate father could not have made greater sacrifices than Beethoven has done in this case. . . . After being with him above an hour, we agreed to meet again at one o'clock, in the romantic valley close by, and there dine together. We visited the baths, and other objects of interest, returned to Beethoven's house, where he was already waiting for us, and then set out for the valley. Beethoven is an excellent pedestrian, and delights in long walks, especially amidst wild and romantic scenery. I am assured that he sometimes passes whole nights on such excursions, and is absent from home for several days at a time. On our way to the valley he often stopped suddenly to point out the beauties of the prospect, or remark upon the defects in the buildings we passed. At another time he would seem absorbed in thought, and merely hummed indistinctly as he walked forward. I was told that this was his manner of composing, and that he never wrote down a note till he had formed a definite plan of the whole piece. As the day was uncommonly fine, we dined in the open air; and, what appeared particularly to please Beethoven, we were the only guests in the hotel, and were not interrupted during the whole day. The repast prepared for us was so luxurious, that Beethoven could not help remarking upon it. 'Why so many different dishes?' he said. 'Man is raised but little above the other animals if his chief enjoyment consists in the pleasures of the table.' He made several similar observations during the meal. He likes nothing but fish, and trout is his favourite. Restraint of all kinds he utterly abhors; and I do not think there is a man in Vienna who speaks on all, even political subjects, with so little reserve as Beethoven. He hears with difficulty; but he speaks remarkably well; and his observations are as characteristic and original as his music. Nothing more interested me, during the course of our conversation at table, than his remarks respecting Handel. I sat next to him, and heard him distinctly say, in German, 'Handel is the greatest composer that ever lived.' I cannot describe the feeling, I might say, the enthusiasm, with which he spoke of the *Messiah*, the masterpiece of that immortal genius. We could not but feel emotion when he added, 'I would uncover my head and kneel upon his grave.' I endeavoured repeatedly to lead the conversation to Mozart, but in vain. I merely heard him say, 'In a monarchy we know who is the first;' an expression which might refer to the subject I sought to introduce or not. I afterwards heard that Beethoven is sometimes inexhaustible in praise of Mozart.

"It is remarkable that Beethoven cannot bear to hear his earlier works commended; and I was told that there is no surer way of making him angry than in praising them. He prefers his last works. His second Mass he considers to be his best. He is at present employed in writing a new opera, called *Melusina*, the text being from the pen of the poet Grillparzer. Beethoven is a great admirer of the ancients. He prefers Homer (especially his *Odyssey*) and Plutarch to all others. Of the poets of his own country, he reads chiefly Goethe and Schiller.

Of the British nation he has the most favourable opinion. 'I like,' he said, 'the noble simplicity of English manners;' and more to the same effect. It seemed to me as if he still cherished the idea of visiting England, accompanied by his nephew. I must not forget to mention that I heard a trio, composed by him for the pianoforte, violin, and violoncello, whilst still only in manuscript. It appeared to me very beautiful, and, I hear, will soon be produced in London. Much more could I relate of this extraordinary man, who, after all I have seen and heard of him, inspires me with the most profound admiration. The kindness with which he treated me, and the friendly manner in which he bade me farewell, have left an impression which will last as long as life itself."

The reception which Beethoven gave to a brother artist, Carl Maria von Weber, in the year 1823, is thus described by that celebrated composer:—

"We called several times, but he was then in a bad humour, and shunned all society. At last we were lucky enough to catch the favourable moment. We were shown into his room, and found him seated at his writing-table, from which he did not rise to welcome us. Beethoven had known me for some years, so that I could enter into conversation with him. Suddenly he sprang up, stood upright before me, and laying his hands on my shoulders, shook me with a kind of rough cordiality, and said: 'You have always been a capital fellow.' With these words he embraced me most affectionately. Amongst all the marks of distinction I received at Vienna, none affected me so deeply as this fraternal embrace of Beethoven's."

To the physical sufferings from which he was never wholly exempt, and which became still more intense in the last years of his life, was added the mortification of finding himself almost forgotten by the public of Vienna, at that time intoxicated by the sweetness of Rossini's melodies. Under these circumstances, a few of the true lovers of the art presented an address to Beethoven, in which, after expressing their high admiration of his genius, they earnestly requested the speedy production of his two last works, viz., the Ninth Symphony, and the *Missa solennis*. A concert took place, in which these pieces were performed. But their author was incapacitated from hearing them; and, what is more, from listening to the rapturous and boisterous applause with which they were greeted. He was not asked to turn round, or he might have seen the delight pictured upon every countenance, and the hearty manner in which it was manifested. Strangely enough, on a repetition of the same performances the house was nearly empty; thus showing how capricious is the breath of popular favour. The ear of the populace had been captivated by the strains of a rival artist, and Beethoven catered for them in vain.

He now determined to offer the Mass already referred to, which was still in manuscript, to the various courts of Europe for fifty ducats; but only the Emperor of Russia, and the Kings of France, Prussia, and Saxony, accepted the offer. Beethoven was privately asked, at the instance of the Russian ambassador in Vienna, whether an order of knighthood would not be more acceptable than money; but he decided, without a moment's deliberation, for the latter. The King of France sent him a large gold medal, with his likeness on one side, and the words, *Donné par le roi à M. Beethoven*, on the other. On this occasion

Beethoven also wrote to Cherubini, but received no answer. In the latter years of his life he received from the publishers very fair remuneration for his works. For each of his last Sonatas and Quartetts he was paid from forty to eighty ducats, although for many others he received too little. There were, however, not wanting instances in which he was robbed of the well-earned fruits of his labour. Amongst others a Russian Prince, who ordered three Quartetts, for which he agreed to pay 150 ducats, withheld the money; and, although frequent demands were made for it on the part of Beethoven, it was never sent.

Bitter as were such disappointments, Beethoven had to endure a severer trial in the base ingratitude of his nephew, for whom he had for many years made many and great sacrifices, and subjected himself to various privations. He had been visiting his brother John, and returned to Vienna with his nephew in an open carriage, on the 2nd December, 1826. The weather at this time was unusually inclement, and the exposure in so severe a season produced on Beethoven the most disastrous consequences. He was attacked with inflammation of the lungs, and dropsy supervened. He was unable to obtain the advice of his former physician, and it was not till some days had elapsed, that Dr. Wavrich, having heard by chance of his illness, and that he was without medical assistance, hastened to see him. He was, nearly two months after, joined by another physician, a former friend of Beethoven's, but the malady had then made such progress, that operations to relieve the patient were found necessary from time to time. Whilst in this deplorable condition, his sufferings were aggravated by the apprehension of being soon deprived of the merest necessities, as all the funds he could command did not amount to more than 100 florins. It occurred to him to apply to the Philharmonic Society for assistance; and accordingly, he wrote to Moscheles, in London, whose answer evinced the painful feelings which had been drawn forth by his tale of distress. The letter was accompanied by the sum of £100, which the Society forwarded in alleviation of his wants, with a request that he would make further application should he stand in need of additional assistance.

The warnings of his approaching end Beethoven bore with resignation; and, since he had little in this life to make him happy, the prospect of death was not so beset with terror as might have been anticipated. He hastened to arrange his worldly affairs, bequeathing to his unworthy nephew everything he possessed, with the exception of the original scores of his later works, on which he wrote with his own hand, that he left them to one who, especially in the latest period of his life, had given him abundant proof of the sincerest and most disinterested friendship. At this very time he was planning several new works, including an Oratorio to be entitled, *The Triumph of the Cross*; but, after the severest sufferings, he at length paid the debt of nature; whilst surrounded by his brother John and several of his most intimate friends. He breathed his last during a tremendous hailstorm, on the 26th of March, 1827, at half past five in the evening.

The following description of the closing scene of his life is from the pen of an eye-witness.

"When I came to him on the morning of the 24th March, I found his countenance entirely changed, and he was so weak that it was only by the greatest

exertion he was able to articulate a few words. Dr. Wavruich came in soon after. He looked at him for a few moments, and then said to me 'Death is not far distant.' As his will had been made the day before, our great desire now was that he should be reconciled with heaven, and show to the world that he died a true Christian. Dr. Wavruich begged him, in the names of all his friends, to receive the last rites of the Church; upon which, with the most perfect calmness, he replied 'I will.' The Rector of the Parish came about midday, and Beethoven received the Sacrament with the most edifying devotion. He now seemed to think that his end was near, for scarcely had the Clergyman left the room, when he said '*Plaudite amici comedia finita est.*' Towards evening he became unconscious, and began to wander in conversation. He continued in this state till the evening of the 25th, when it became evident that dissolution was fast approaching. He lingered, however, till the following evening, and died at a quarter past five.

The arrangements for his funeral were superintended by his friends Stephen von Brenning and A. Schindler. It took place on the 29th of March. The bier was followed by a large concourse of persons of every rank and condition, from the house where he died to the neighbouring Church where his obsequies were celebrated. His earthly remains were then conveyed to the Cemetery, where Anschütz the actor, pronounced a funeral oration composed by Grillparzer. A silver medal was struck to his memory, and his bust soon adorned the halls which had resounded with his music."

The following brief description of Beethoven's personal appearance will not be uninteresting. "He was five feet, four inches in height, of a strong and compact build, and very muscular. His head was very large, and covered with long, shaggy gray hair, which not unfrequently rested on his shoulders. His forehead was high and broad, and when he laughed his small brown eyes almost disappeared altogether. But they would soon flash again from side to side, the pupils being almost invariably turned upwards, or if an idea struck him, remain fixed and motionless in a long and abstracted gaze. In such moments he underwent a sudden change, the inspiration, which transformed his whole appearance, imparting to it an imposing grandeur, and his diminutive stature seemed to assume the proportions of a giant."

From what we have seen of Beethoven's character it is evident that a largeness of soul beamed forth in all his acts; and, though of diminutive stature, he was one of the few great men which a generation sees. He was thoroughly kind hearted, and generous to a degree, though abhorring every sort of ostentation. He had no sympathy for anything that was mean or unjust, and he hated all false dealing. But he was a stranger to worldly wisdom, and the knowledge of mankind; and exhibited the credulity of a child in matters where caution and experience should direct. As a musician, he combined the most profound knowledge of music as a science with the happy talent of invention, and his melodies possess the utmost originality and sweetness. In his earlier works he followed in all essential points the practice in instrumental music which guided Haydn and Mozart. His genius sympathised alike with the genial flow which distinguished the compositions of the former, and the melting tenderness which

characterise the works of the latter. But subsequently, when Haydn devoted himself principally to Church music, and Mozart laid the foundation of his enduring fame in his dramatic compositions, Beethoven followed an entirely different path. His seclusion from the world led him into the region of instrumental music; he cherished the art for its own sake, and his pianoforte was his sole and all-sufficient companion. His own compositions for that instrument were the cycle in which his creative powers were wont to move. By a better adapted treatment, and by entering more deeply into the nature and capabilities of his favourite instrument, Beethoven soon left his great predecessors immeasurably behind him.

Whenever Beethoven took a subject in hand it used to expand under his mighty touch. So absorbed was he in the idea that he would pursue the train of thought with insatiable avidity. He enlarged upon the form he had chosen, but always in conformity with the rules of his art, and brought out such wonderful combinations as to excite the utmost admiration, even amongst the initiated. Speaking of Beethoven's compositions, Mr. Schindler says, "My feelings with respect to Beethoven's music have undergone no variation, save to become warmer. In the first half-score years of my acquaintance with his works, he was repulsive to me as well as attractive. In each of them, while I felt my mind fascinated by the prominent idea, and my enthusiasm kindled by the flashes of his genius, his unlooked for episodes, shrill dissonances, and bold modulations, gave me an unpleasant sensation. But how soon did I become reconciled to them? All that had appeared hard I soon found indispensable. The gnome-like pleasantries which at first appeared too distorted, —the stormy masses of sound, which I found too chaotic—I have in after times learned to love."

But however grand may be his compositions for the piano, his orchestral works are grander still. Here his bold genius could take a freer and loftier flight. He felt at home, so to speak, with the instrumental world, his unfortunate deafness having debarred him from communion with his own species, and he revelled in the mass of harmonious murmurs evoked by his masterly genius. The various states of mind his compositions pourtray reveal the depth and fervour of his own feelings. In no composer are qualities of tenderness and force more happily blended; and so long as music charms our ears, and its beauties are understood and appreciated, the name of Beethoven will stand out amongst his contemporaries as one who successfully cultivated with untiring ardour, the rarest natural gifts that in all probability it ever fell to the lot of man to possess.

ROYAL ITALIAN OPERA.

M. AMBROISE THOMAS'S *Hamlet*, produced at this establishment on the 19th ult., adds one more to the many mistakes committed by operatic composers in the choice of their *libretti*. From the long list of Shakspeare's plays which have from time to time been dressed up in operatic form, we cannot name one which has held possession of the stage; and, in confirmation of our opinion, that the fact of their having been immortalised as dramas, in which the deepest study of human nature, and the most elevated poetry are indissolubly united, renders it extremely hazardous to set them as operas, we may mention that no composer of the highest order of genius has ever attempted the task. But small men rush in where great